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[Exploring epistemic injustice and alternative facts.](#)

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Exploring epistemic injustice and alternative facts

Abstract

This paper draws on emerging research into ways in which our capacity to know is challenged. It additionally examines the implications for individuals and social groups when those in positions of power manipulate knowledge for their own gain by marginalising and undermining the knowledge of others. In the extreme, 'gaslighting' may be used by such powerful individuals, that is, to cause others to question their own knowledge to the extent that they are silenced through a loss of security in their own knowledge. Identities, communities and solidarities may be challenged at best and dismantled at worst. The relationship between such epistemic injustice and related concepts of communicative direction, such as propaganda, bullshit, and lying, is discussed. Connections are made between this and Bourdieu's two notions of: symbolic power, that is, the power to influence what is accepted as order; and world making, that is the power to set the agenda for how things are and/or should be. Through an analysis of news media relating to the behaviours of political actors in the UK and the US, issues relating to the control of knowledge are explored. The extent to which certain people's knowledge may be privileged and marginalised is shown. Some initial thoughts on the implications of this for democratic engagement are presented for discussion.